

Court Information Release



United States District Court
Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
219 South Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois 60604

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Northern District of Illinois Sanctions Chicago Attorney for Photographing and Tweeting Evidence from Federal Courtroom

CHICAGO, Ill. – Today Chief Judge Rubén Castillo entered an order sanctioning Chicago attorney Vincent P. Schmeltz III. The Northern District of Illinois Executive Committee found that Schmeltz had violated Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure Rule 53, Northern District of Illinois Local Rule 83.1(c), and Northern District of Illinois General Order 09-015 when he took photographs of evidence presented during witness testimony on large screen monitors in courtroom 1941 in the trial of *United States v. Coscia* and tweeted nine broadcasts, with each tweet including a photograph of the evidence.

Schmeltz is a partner at the law firm of Barnes & Thornburg LLP and was in the public area of courtroom 1941 on October 28, 2015. A Special Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation observed Schmeltz use a handheld device to take photographs of evidence that was presented during witness testimony. An approximately four foot tall sign posted directly outside courtroom 1941 stated, “PHOTOGRAPHING, RECORDING OR BROADCASTING IS PROHIBITED.”

On November 6, 2015, Judge Castillo issued Schmeltz an order to show cause why sanctions should not be imposed upon him. Schmeltz was given an opportunity to address the court and submit written briefs regarding his actions. After review, the Executive Committee determined that sanctions were necessary and appropriate in view of the Executive Committee’s conclusion that Schmeltz’s violations were economically motivated. The Executive Committee ordered Schmeltz to do the following:

- Personally contribute \$5,000 to the Chicago Bar Foundation within 30 days of the issuance of the order,
- Attend a continuing education seminar addressing the use of social media and its implications for lawyers within 6 months of the issuance of the order, and

- Dedicate at least 50 hours in 2016 to community service at the William J. Hibbler *Pro Se* Assistance Desk in the Northern District of Illinois.

Judge Castillo stated that it was the hope of the Executive Committee that all lawyers learn from this unfortunate incident.

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